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ABSTRACT

Noting that firearms outnumber children by a margin of almost three to one in the United States, this report advocates gun safety policies to protect children. The report provides information on trends in youth firearm deaths and finds the statistics alarming, despite recent decline. The first of three tables in the report delineates 1979-1999 statistics on firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0-19 nationwide, differentiating deaths due to homicide, suicide, accident, and unknown intent. The second table delineates 1997-1999 statistics on firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0-19 for each state and nationwide, differentiating deaths due to homicide, suicide, accident, and unknown intent. The final table provides information on firearm deaths in 1999 by age, race, and manner. It is argued that despite recent declines, the number remains one of America's silent tragedies. The report finds that: (1) children and youths in rural states are more likely to be victims of gun suicides and accidents than those in more urban states; (2) children in large urban areas are more likely to be victims of gun homicides; and (3) 1.4 million homes, which house 2.6 million children, had firearms that were stored unlocked and loaded, or unlocked and unloaded but stored with ammunition. The report concludes by asserting that it is time to protect children instead of guns. (SD)

Protect Children Instead of Guns, 2001.

Children's Defense Fund
Washington, D.C.

2001

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PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS 2001



The latest deadly numbers about children and gun violence in a single year show:

- 3,365 children and teens were killed by gunfire
- 1,990 were murdered by gunfire
- 1,078 committed suicide with a firearm
- 214 died from an accidental shooting
- 1,934 were White
- 1,301 were Black
- 605 were Hispanic
- 488 were under age 15
- 153 were under age 10
- 73 were under age 5
- More children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.



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...the fact that the National Center for Health Statistics, which is the source of the data, has not yet published the data for 1999. The data for 1998 shows that 3,761 children and teenagers died from firearms, a decrease from 4,205 in 1997. The data for 1999 shows that 3,365 children and teenagers died from firearms, a decrease from 3,761 in 1998. The data for 1999 shows that 1,990 children and teenagers died from homicide, a decrease from 2,184 in 1998. The data for 1999 shows that 1,078 children and teenagers died from suicide, a decrease from 1,241 in 1998. The data for 1999 shows that 214 children and teenagers died from accident, a decrease from 262 in 1998. The data for 1999 shows that 83 children and teenagers died from unknown causes, a decrease from 74 in 1998.

Firearms deaths, by manner, persons under age 20, 1979-1999 (excludes legal intervention)

Year	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74
1999	3,365	1,990	1,078	214	83
Total	86,971	47,267	27,418	10,422	1,864

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations; and National Vital Statistics Report Vol. 49, No. 8, "Deaths: Final Data for 1999" (September 21, 2001), Table 17. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

Did you know?

- In 1999, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that 1,990 children and teenagers died from homicide, a decrease from 2,184 in 1998.
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It's time to protect children, instead of guns.

Firearms deaths of children and teens ages 0-19, by manner, 1997-1999

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
Alabama	93	86	83	57	47	44	23	24	26	10	11	10	3	4	3
Alaska	23	16	23	9	3	9	10	10	11	2	3	1	2	0	2
Arizona	117	102	86	53	49	55	52	43	30	5	6	0	7	4	1
Arkansas	55	69	40	28	36	15	18	24	20	7	3	3	2	6	2
California	594	493	402	457	372	320	106	102	66	26	13	8	5	6	8
Colorado	57	60	63	22	29	34	31	26	24	4	4	3	0	1	2
Connecticut	21	23	18	17	15	13	4	6	5	0	2	0	0	0	0
Delaware	7	2	5	2	2	1	5	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
District of Columbia	65	30	45	59	27	41	4	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	0
Florida	165	154	137	108	80	86	44	65	43	12	8	4	1	1	4
Georgia	129	111	117	70	61	67	35	39	41	20	10	5	4	1	4
Hawaii	3	4	0	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	26	27	23	2	3	7	21	18	13	3	5	3	0	1	0
Illinois	254	264	228	211	206	182	29	40	37	10	13	7	4	5	2
Indiana	79	92	91	47	57	57	21	27	27	8	7	6	3	1	1
Iowa	33	26	23	8	6	2	20	15	17	3	5	2	2	0	2
Kansas	53	54	31	28	28	12	17	22	14	7	3	3	1	1	2
Kentucky	57	44	39	34	17	21	16	23	11	7	3	5	0	1	2
Louisiana	154	124	93	98	74	52	39	35	27	15	15	11	2	0	3
Maine	13	10	9	3	2	2	10	7	5	0	1	1	0	0	1
Maryland	104	108	98	91	89	78	11	13	16	2	2	0	0	4	4
Massachusetts	24	28	20	17	19	10	6	8	9	0	1	0	1	0	1
Michigan	156	135	116	103	87	66	41	43	40	10	3	7	2	2	3
Minnesota	55	34	45	26	12	15	25	22	27	4	0	3	0	0	0
Mississippi	81	55	72	41	28	37	28	19	17	11	7	11	1	1	7
Missouri	97	89	92	48	52	47	34	32	34	13	4	7	2	1	4
Montana	16	17	19	4	3	2	8	12	12	3	2	5	1	0	0
Nebraska	26	30	18	12	13	6	13	15	11	1	2	1	0	0	0
Nevada	34	48	26	21	26	15	13	20	10	0	1	1	0	1	0
New Hampshire	2	9	4	1	0	1	1	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	53	49	32	43	35	25	7	13	6	3	1	0	0	0	1
New Mexico	40	47	45	22	25	24	14	14	17	3	8	4	1	0	0
New York	146	123	132	107	88	101	33	28	25	4	5	5	2	2	1
North Carolina	92	88	93	45	43	54	37	30	33	9	13	4	1	2	2
North Dakota	8	7	9	0	2	2	8	4	6	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ohio	95	100	81	49	48	38	36	41	30	8	11	10	2	0	3
Oklahoma	82	61	62	48	22	28	29	30	21	3	6	12	2	3	1
Oregon	38	30	33	13	10	7	19	13	21	3	4	5	3	3	0
Pennsylvania	167	123	124	108	79	77	49	34	39	9	4	5	1	6	3
Rhode Island	4	5	8	2	4	6	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	54	60	51	32	30	22	16	23	20	5	7	8	1	0	1
South Dakota	12	12	14	0	2	1	7	9	9	5	1	3	0	0	1
Tennessee	117	109	85	64	53	47	37	38	22	12	16	12	4	2	4
Texas	377	322	254	194	176	141	139	108	89	39	29	21	5	9	3
Utah	35	32	21	10	12	3	24	19	17	0	1	0	1	0	1
Vermont	4	5	3	2	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
Virginia	114	97	86	68	46	48	39	39	35	5	9	3	2	3	0
Washington	83	66	62	35	28	20	36	32	34	8	5	6	4	1	2
West Virginia	23	19	19	9	5	8	10	12	10	3	1	0	1	1	1
Wisconsin	58	53	74	31	30	41	26	18	27	1	5	6	0	0	0
Wyoming	10	9	11	1	1	0	7	6	11	2	1	0	0	1	0
United States	4,205	3,761	3,365	2,562	2,184	1,990	1,262	1,241	1,078	306	262	214	75	74	83

*Total firearms deaths and homicide firearms deaths exclude firearms deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention and deaths by air rifles.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III: Deaths from 282 selected causes [1997 and 1998]; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Table III: Deaths from 358 selected causes [1999]. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

Firearms deaths of children and teens, by age, manner, and race/Hispanic origin, 1999

	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	Total under 20
All races*	8	65	80	335	2,877	3,365
Accident	0	12	19	57	126	214
Suicide	0	0	0	103	975	1,078
Homicide	8	50	61	163	1,708	1,990
Unknown intent	0	3	0	12	68	83
White	4	32	41	248	1,609	1,934
Accident	0	5	9	48	88	150
Suicide	0	0	0	94	817	911
Homicide	4	26	32	95	662	819
Unknown intent	0	1	0	11	42	54
Black	2	27	32	73	1,167	1,301
Accident	0	7	9	8	36	60
Suicide	0	0	0	5	120	125
Homicide	2	18	23	59	991	1,093
Unknown intent	0	2	0	1	20	23
Hispanic**	2	6	11	58	528	605
Accident	0	0	0	3	15	18
Suicide	0	0	0	13	94	107
Homicide	2	5	11	41	410	469
Unknown intent	0	1	0	1	9	11

*Includes races other than White or Black.

**Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 49, No. 8.

Deaths: Final Data for 1999 (September 21, 2001), Table 17, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table 210A, Deaths from 113 selected causes. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

